

**GOVERNMENT OF INDIA
ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS
LOK SABHA**

STARRED QUESTION NO:632

ANSWERED ON:21.05.2012

POACHING OF FLAPSHELL TURTLES

Gandhi Shri Feroze Varun;Gandhi Smt. Maneka Sanjay

Will the Minister of ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS be pleased to state:

- (a) whether the Government has taken a note of Poaching in the smuggling of the endangered Indian Flapshell Turtles via Bangladesh to Meghalaya's Garo Hills;
- (b) if so, the details thereof;
- (c) whether the Government has taken any steps to stop this illegal wildlife trade;
- (d) if so, the details thereof; and
- (e) the action taken by the Government in this regard?

Answer

MINISTER OF STATE (INDEPENDENT CHARGE) FOR ENVIRONMENT AND FORESTS (SHRIMATI JAYANTHI NATARAJAN)

(a),(b), (c), (d) and (e) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

STATEMENT REFERRED TO IN REPLY TO PARTS (a), (b), (c), d) and (e) OF THE LOK SABHA STARRED QUESTION NO 632 REGARDING 'POACHING OF FLAPSHELL TURTLES' BY SHRI VARUN GANDHI AND SHRIMATI MANEKA GANDHI DUE FOR REPLY ON 21.5.2012.

(a)and(b) The Forest Department of the Government of Meghalaya has detected two cases of smuggling of Indian Flapshell Turtles (*Lissemys punctata*) from Bangladesh to Garo Hills in Meghalaya. In the first case, three turtles were seized and one person was arrested. This matter is under trial. In the second case, two turtles were seized but the offender could not be arrested.

(c), (d) and (e) The wildlife staff of the Government of Meghalaya regularly patrols and checks the vulnerable areas along the Indo-Bangla border to keep an eye on illegal trade in turtles. The Border Security Force personnel are also informed and sensitized about such trade during district level intelligence meetings regarding Indo-Bangladesh border issues. The Central Government has taken the following steps to stop illegal trade in wild animals and animal articles including Indian Flapshell Turtle and products/derivatives made from it:

- i. Highest degree of protection has been provided to Indian Flapshell Turtle which has been included in Schedule I of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, and its hunting and commercial exploitation is prohibited. Offences committed in respect of this species attract maximum punishment prescribed under the Act.
- ii. The Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972, has been amended and made more stringent. The punishments for offences have been enhanced. The Act also provides for forfeiture of any equipment, vehicle or weapon that is used for committing wildlife offence(s).
- iii. Protected Areas, viz., National Parks, Sanctuaries, Conservation Reserves and Community Reserves covering important wildlife habitats have been created all over the country under the provisions of the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to conserve wild animals and their habitats.
- iv. Financial and technical assistance is provided to the State/ Union Territory Governments under the Centrally Sponsored Schemes of 'Integrated Development of Wildlife Habitats', 'Project Tiger' and 'Project Elephant' for providing better protection to wildlife, and improvement of its habitat.
- v. The Central Bureau of Investigation (CBI) has been empowered under the Wild Life (Protection) Act, 1972 to apprehend and prosecute wildlife offenders.
- vi. The State/Union Territory Governments have been requested to strengthen the field formations and intensify patrolling in and around the Protected Areas.
- vii. The Wildlife Crime Control Bureau has been set up to strengthen the enforcement of law for control of poaching and illegal trade in wildlife and its products.

